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BY Tom Rooney  
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Unless Congress acts soon, on Jan. 1, the largest tax increase in history will go into effect. Failure to act would force higher tax rates on every American taxpayer and place additional obstacles in the way of economic growth and job creation.

Allowing this job-killing tax hike to go into effect would leave small-business owners and family farmers with less capital to invest in their businesses and hire new workers. Families and working Americans would have less money in their wallets to pay their mortgages and put food on their tables.

During the worst recession in decades, can we really afford to take more money out of the economy and out of the pockets of American families, farmers, small businesses and job creators?

No, we absolutely cannot. With our economy on the ropes and unemployment in Florida still above 11 percent, a massive \$3.9 trillion tax increase that will hurt small businesses and kill even more jobs is the last thing we need.

On Sept. 8, I conducted a small-business forum in Fort Pierce, listened to hardworking small-business owners who are struggling to keep their doors open. The challenges they described echo the concerns I have heard from small business owners throughout south central Florida over the last two years.

Small-business owners and entrepreneurs are struggling to access the capital they need to grow or open new businesses. As a result, small businesses, which create most of the jobs in this country, have been unable to grow and create new jobs. Taking additional capital out of the

private sector through a massive take increase would only exacerbate this difficulty.

Florida's small-business owners also are afraid that the tax increases and burdensome mandates handed down by this Congress in the new health care bill were only the beginning. They see looming tax increases at the end of this year, and this uncertainty leaves them reluctant to invest what little capital they have into growing their business. They worry about hiring new workers, knowing that they may not be able to afford to pay their salaries in a few months when this tax increase goes into effect.

Simply put, small businesses cannot grow or hire new workers under the threat of a \$3.9 trillion tax increase. To give our small businesses and entrepreneurs the stability and certainty they need to grow and create good jobs, Congress must work urgently to block any tax increase.

By eliminating the uncertainty created by the threat of tax hikes, we can remove this obstacle to growth and give our economy a chance to recover.

Freezing taxes at their 2008 levels, a commonsense proposal with strong bipartisan support, would immediately give our small-businesses owners and entrepreneurs the confidence they need to jump-start their businesses and help put Americans back to work. Now is the time to listen to our small business owners, listen to working families, and stop this massive tax hike.

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